



# We Should Have Left Iraq Far Sooner

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Leaving Iraq was a wise decision; we should have left far sooner. The United States has gained little from the war, and the benefits will never approach what we expended in blood and treasure. Indeed, the war likely undermined American security, and would continue to do so if we had left our troops there for another decade, or more, as some of the most fervent advocates for war wanted us to do.

[\[Mort Zuckerman: Barack Obama's Middle East Miscalculation.\]](#)

Of course, the United States should never have invaded Iraq in the first place. The war was sold on false pretenses, but the most serious flaw in the war advocates' case was their reckless cost estimates. Some claimed that the war would be cost-free, paid for by revenues from Iraqi oil. Others ventured guesses ranging between \$50 billion and \$200 billion. These absurdly low estimates were sustained by the belief that Iraqi citizens would embrace a foreign military presence. They didn't.

The direct costs of the war totaled nearly \$1 trillion, and the costs to care for those injured in the war is likely to exceed \$2 trillion. The final tally won't be known for years. We could have spent this money elsewhere—at home, or in the hunt for al Qaeda and other terrorists in countless other places. Withdrawing from Iraq allows us refocus our attention and resources on building our nation here at home, and on addressing the few legitimate security challenges we face.

[\[See pictures of soldiers returning home from Iraq.\]](#)

The troops and their families have paid the dearest price. Over 4,400 Americans were killed in Iraq; nearly 32,000 more were wounded. Many more will carry psychological and emotional scars that don't show up in the official casualty statistics. We do not honor their sacrifice by clinging to the fiction that this mission was vital to U.S. security. It wasn't, but that is the fault of those who sold the war, not of those tasked with fighting it.

No amount of additional sacrifice by our brave men and women in uniform would change the final fundamental truth about Iraq: The Iraqis wanted their country back. Now they have it. I wish them well.